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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 195 (2015) 1471 – 1476

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

World Conference on Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Leadership in TVET for the 21st Century: Challenges, Roles and Characteristics

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Abstract

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was often judge as a place for those who only fated to do menial and dirty jobs resulted from their poor academic achievement. The so judgmental assumption has been long mingling in the orthodox view of education landscape and it made the heart of those who: run it, in it, feel it, felt so crush and stymied. TVET was often disregard as a significant player in academic orientation and those statement has been slowly discarded since many are aware that TVET are the best providers of knowledgeable and skilled workers in the 21st century. The curvy path of this 21st century challenges were geared by more than 'will' and 'gut' of a leaders to plot and positioned TVET in it class. This primary research attempted to explore the challenges, roles and leadership characteristics from the single view perception of a higher ranking leader in TVET institution. The finding of this study suggested besides of having two ears, arms and feet, leader have to ensure their followers are not out of reach by portray what best describe as 'necessary'. Specifically, the findings was presented in two set formats; quotations of participant opinion in qualitative form and tabular format for quantitative forms.

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Peer-review under responsibility of Istanbul Univeristy.

Keywords: Leadership; TVET; Challenges; Roles; Characteristics

1. Introduction

Many believes that wearing cross check collar and sitting in the air conditioning rooms with ergonomics seating was a promising future with thousand dollars lay easily at hands. Those beliefs was inherited genes by genes, decade

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by decade and people always sees that Technical Vocational and Education Training was a zero hope (Brennan, 2014; City& Guilds Centre for Development (CSD) & The Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET), 2011). However, the sagacity of those 'dirty unpromising TVET' was slowly discarded since many countries are aware that TVET is one of the viable path for pursuing successful career and the blissful field of uprising the economy, people and country (Omar & Krauss, 2011; UNESCO, 2010). The affecting challenges uproar in the 21st century intersects while many education institutions struggling to sustain (Sirat, Ahmad, & Azman, 2012; Wooldridge, 2011). The challenges ranging from external issues such as: globalization, ranking and reputation, diversity, IT revolutions and internal issues such: as motivation, stakeholder expectation, local engagement, resistance to change and job satisfaction (Hallinger, 2014; Sirat et al., 2012; Ngambi, 2011).

With respect to this, Sirat et. al., (2012) mentioned the effective leadership positioning in higher education could scanning the windows of opportunity and take wise action to lead institutions. On the other hand, many has said that leadership play significant roles for organization excellence (Hallinger, 2014; Middlehurst, 2012; Wooldridge, 2011). Brennan (2014) also suggested leadership and leaders are the pursuers of TVET successfulness. In particular, Leaders are expected to be responsible for the branding management (Wooldridge, 2011), defend faculty right to speak controversial issues, shape the direction of institutions (Sirat et. al., 2012), responsible for research enterprise and keeping up with academic activities (Spendlove, 2007), and bring the transformations (Normore, 2009). With so many expectations, this paper attempted to explore the view of higher ranking leader from single institution towards the challenges, roles and characteristics portray by leader in TVET.

2. Methodology

- *Strategy of inquiry*

As identified by Creswell (2007) there are 5 strategies of inquiry namely as narrative, case study, ethnography, phenomenology and grounded theory. In this study, the adoption of phenomenological inquiry seems reliable to discover the lived experience of leaders in TVET about the challenges, roles and their effective characteristics. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, (2002) mentioned the expression, body gestures and voice are a part of living bodies experience including competencies. Thus with this gurus perspectives, it provided a basis to shovel the experience of leaders in facing the challenges, roles and characteristics and their creative practices for TVET excellence.

- *Sampling*

The aim of this study is to explore the challenges, roles and characteristics of higher ranking leader in TVET institution based on single view perception of participant. This qualitative study was conducted in Southeast Asian country comprise of one higher ranking leader in TVET institution. The participant of this study was selected using purposeful sampling based on his experience leading organization and his current position. The selection of individuals and this type of sampling was employed because the participant had experience the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). In addition, this type of sampling require researcher to have some knowledge about the things being studied to ensure the certain people selected display the attributes of search (Berg L. B, 2001).

- *Data collection*

This study was guided by a set of protocols with a consent agreement from participant. The means for data collections was based on in depth interview with participant. Besides interview, the curriculum vitae of participant was collected to conform his past and former experience in leading. The in depth interview are most appropriate when the participant cannot be directly observed (Creswell, 2009).

- *Data Analysis*

The raw material from the interview was transcribed manually. The extraction of themes was done using Atlasti data management tools. As excerpt by Simon & Goes (2011) analysis for phenomenology study best employed the 5 steps which start from collect first sources to understand meaning of description on phenomena used 'reduction' methods to get essential meaning of each individual experience, analysis specific statement to pull out overreaching statement, ensure that participant has checked their transcript to avoid misinterpretation of their views and use pseudonym to identified participant as to maintain confidentiality.

3. All about 'leadership'

3.1. Leadership Definition

Definition of leadership was dynamic when many scholars tend to describe leadership in their own interpretation. Rost (1991) mentioned in his book that there is no agreeable or standard set of leadership definition and in fact he found out there are 221 definition of leadership through his extensive readings on 557 books. Leadership was describe as mysterious yet so powerful (Sirat et. al., 2012), the ability to influence peoples (Northouse, 2013), and the process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes (Spendlove, 2007). In particular, interviewee response towards leadership definition as quote:

"This leadership is.. no one ..no perfect systems in leadership. When I read like steve job, Richard Branson.. they have their own.. they always claimed its not taught in university. Sometimes its need a bit of luck and you must be able to take the opportunities. When opportunities is there, you must grab it fast"

"My worries are you won't be able to come up with one leadership theory. Because there is kind different of leadership. there is no one magic system of leadership characteristics".

"..Leadership is depends on context.. It's dynamic..."

In regards with his response, this study neglected the idea of applying deductive kind of findings because this study are the inclination of exploring lived experience of individual in facing the challenges, roles and characteristics possessed as a higher ranking leader in TVET.

3.2. Challenges

As a cast of prominent roles in organization, leaders are equipped with an "anti-panic personality" that bears a thousand responsibilities. Having more power mean having more responsibility and accountability (Mok, 2010). The power they held not only used to give order to follower but they have to navigating the institution for excellence. The excellence not only achieved by directing, but also how leaders cope and immerse in their sense to use challenge as opportunities (Normore, 2009). In response with this challenges, interviewee quote are:

".. people like senior people ..they are demotivated. They just come.. come to work.. this is the biggest problems. If you move them, they will become the problems to other division or something like that.."

"..they are just waiting for their pension.. they careless.."

"..Many of this.. especially in this region, they do not hunger for learning, because they are comfortable. I don't

know what's going on to Malaysia, but here we have staff exchange, but they don't want"

"they simply said' I don't want.. I '*malas*' ..not all, but most in my organization, I think.."

This response connotes the idea of demotivation, resistance to change and low morale among staff and personnel. Ngambi (2011) mentioned the low morale among personnel lead to less proactive and retention issues. Another challenges spotted on is satisfying the stakeholder. The stakeholder satisfaction carry the KPI (Quality Performance Indicator) weightage of institutions (Hallinger, 2014). The stakeholder satisfaction were said as 'tricky-triangle' by Winter (2006).

"I think you must understand the need to satisfy the need of stakeholders. Everyone in the circle.. The government for example. They fund us, but you must give something to them in return"

3.3. Roles and leadership characteristics

Leadership need more than 'will' and 'gut' and it was found out a plethora of research crafted the leaders roles and characteristics in different setting. Brennan (2014) stated that leaders in TVET were expected to gear the transformation in which the dynamic, relevant and accessible system can be created. He further adds international leadership was needed to exhibit themselves in the global stage. In addition, leaders roles covered the engagement with intense dialogue on 360 circle of organization (Wooldridge, 2011), keeping up with academic activities (Spendlove, 2007) , being the public figure (Sirat et. al., 2012) and expanding trade through transnational education and global network research (Middlehurst, 2012). In response with the roles and characteristics of the leaders, he mentioned:

"I'm more macro management rather than micro mgt. I don't dare to become a superman. I believe in my subordinate under link.. Direct down.. who report me. I make sure they are performing but I don't go down.. ask much. I tried not to.. what you called overtake peoples authority down there, so you know sometimes you override their decision , so it's not good cause err.. they will become redundant and you have to do all the job, all the monitoring yourself. you are not superman. you remember that. you rely on your colleagues. You must able to disseminate the task, you must be able to.."

His replied connotes the message of responsibility at the wider spectacles rather than overriding decision made for those possessed certain autonomy. Marshall, Orrell, Cameron, Bosanquet, & Thomas, (2011) mentioned the macro management leaders are responsible for institutional level with external and internal foci including responsible for development and maintenance of an institution's physical and virtual learning environments and units involved in academic administration. Another roles he mentioned is walk and lead the strategic planning. Strategic planning in education involves the development of organizational environment to support the systematic enhancement of teaching and learning (Marshall et. al., 2011). The response towards strategic planning sound as:

"I always do workshop for strategic planning. You lead this workshop and you want to have corporate image and you must be the leading person".

With respect to the roles and characteristics portray by this leader, the second finding are presented in tabular form as follows:

Table 1. Leadership roles and characteristics

Roles/ Characteristics	Description	Support Statement
Sense/ predict the situations	“I feel this is very important. You must be able to sense your staff. If you found that your staff are having a lot of MC, or maybe they are stress, they are not doing enough curricular activities, so you must come up with curricular activities, recreation, families, you must to make sure they have ample time with their families”	Proactive by conducting a survey to staff morale to determine the issues of staff morale (Ngambi, 2011)
Communicate the vision	“I will have general assembly, workshop, a series of workshop and have dialogue in your workshop. You cannot just copycat like Steve jobs. You have to learn but you have to bring all your employees to discuss, of course you lead the discussion”	Shape direction and foster positive thinking to view challenge as opportunity (Sirat et. al., 2012) Provide space for discussion and have the idea about the whole systems (Middlehurst, 2012)
Fair	“make sure you are a fair to everybody. Don’t show any favouritism but at the same time you ‘pat on the back’ to people who are doing well. You must reinforcement. But you must not go outside that scope. So you always pat on the back for people who doing well but at the same time, be fair to everybody”	Developing team and promoting team related activities, offer extra compensation so it could positively contribute to morale building. (Ngambi, 2011)
Role Model	“You have to be insightful, you have to keep update yourself with new approaches, new trends, you have to show your credibility. On the other hands, you must tell the truth. If you don’t know the remedy or the solutions, you must read books, you must read literature. You must keep update. you must ahead of them. So they will respect you more I think..”	Leaders must have academic credibility which he/ she must perceive as academician and roles models who catching up with publication. (Spendlove, 2007)

4. Conclusion

This single view perception of higher ranking leader, which is conducted in TVET institutions was aimed to shovel the true experience of high ranking leaders in navigating and leading the institutions. The true experienced were excerpt from the challenges he faced and also role and characteristics that he possessed. The challenges drawn was mainly stated as in the horizon within his organization such as resistance to change, demotivation and low morale. The list of leadership roles and characteristics was also crafted in which the leader trying his very best to cater the issues of human and also task management.

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